

# Worry and Wonder

*By Dennis Knight*

The challenge is to write on the subject of Worry versus Wonder, so naturally I've worried all week about wonder and wondered all week about worry. They are similar states of mind but I believe they are set apart by the distinction of hope. You can worry about life in a vicious cycle, or wonder about life in the hope of a new tomorrow.

The saga of a misplaced set of car keys begins with wondering why they aren't where they should be, and after checking and rechecking all the usual places, wonder becomes worry. Into what grated storm drain could they have fallen, and how might they be replaced in time to get to work? Sometimes you might even worry that the keys have been lifted and the car has been stolen. But you keep looking until you finally find them deep in the pocket of yesterday's trousers. Worry relaxes into wonder when yet another worry pops up, this one about the state of your mind, but you are mobile again so now you can worry about traffic.

Back in 1988 at a time when I was keeping from everyone deep secrets of financial and marital problems, it seemed hourly the radio played a popular new song, "Don't Worry, Be Happy". It was a peppy and irritatingly contrary reminder that I indeed did have plenty to worry about. It made Bobby McFerrin famous and showed the world his genius, but it left me resentful for decades.

Every attempt I've made at writing this essay brings me straight to thoughts of my brother, whom I consider my best friend. We often tease him about it, but for more than sixty-five years he has represented to me and to our large family the very embodiment of a capacity for unabashed wonder. Every waterfall or bridge or canyon or birdsong impresses him as being the most beautiful thing on the planet, and it is the rare café discovered in our travels that fails to serve him the best breakfast he has ever had. If he has a fault, it is in a generosity that extends far, wide and without reserve. He has lately found himself feeling alone and in a state of deep personal worry. He is not himself, and for that, we worry too.

There is no advice more meaningless and less welcome than when someone, even Bobby McFerrin, tells you not to worry and be happy. But reflecting on my own crisis I now realize there was some truth to the silly song, because worry itself was fixing nothing. It was not even forestalling the things I was worrying about. Worry had me incapacitated in its grip.

Wonder and hope, maybe even faith, like that set of missing car keys, is tucked into some hidden pocket of your mind and soul, but you have to keep searching, because, as Mom told us often, it will always be in the last place you look.